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DIOGENES THE CYNIC AND SHAKESPEARE'S BITTER FOOL: THE POLITICS AND AESTHETICS OF FREE SPEECH

David Hershinow

> *Being asked what was the most beautiful thing in the world, [Diogenes] replied, "Freedom of speech [parrhêsia]."*
>
> —Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (3rd century AD)[1]

> *Cynicism is not, as is often thought, just a somewhat particular, odd, and ultimately forgotten figure in ancient philosophy, but an historical category which, in various forms and with diverse objectives, runs through the whole of Western history.*
>
> —Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth* (1984)[2]

If Diogenes the Cynic has left an indelible legacy in his wake, then it is a legacy bound up in the competing evaluations that his unusual way of life seems always and forever to provoke. To his admirers, Diogenes's extreme material asceticism and his animal-like embrace of shamelessness go hand in hand with his role as the most formidable truth-teller that the world has ever seen, a man who fearlessly pits himself against the false values held by the rest of humanity. But, to his detractors, the very same conduct demonstrates Diogenes's illegitimacy as a truth-teller; it functions as self-evident proof that he is nothing more than a grandstanding eccentric whose vitriol stems from severe personal distemper.

Thanks to a renewed scholarly interest in Cynicism and its legacy, we are just now discovering that these competing responses to the figure of Diogenes together play an important role in the unfolding of Western intellectual history writ large, especially as it concerns the countervailing movements of the Enlightenment and the counter-Enlightenment.

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Heinrich Niehues-Pröbsting, David Mazella, and Louisa Shea have all added ground to this field of inquiry, and, for each of them, Cynicism's guiding influence upon the trajectory of Western thought begins in the mid-eighteenth century and extends into the present.[3] I do not contest this consensus view, and, in fact, it is important to my analysis that Cynicism can be shown to play a central role in our modern condition. But within this context, I will argue that Shakespeare's response to the Diogeneana of an earlier period identifies a key insight into the relationship between the valorized and debased views of Cynic practice, an insight that is especially prescient in light of subsequent intellectual history. By extending backward the renewed investigation into Diogenical philosophy, I hope in this essay to deepen our understanding both of Shakespeare's engagement with Cynicism and of Cynicism's legacy in the West.

As Shea has persuasively shown, Cynicism first became central to Western thought when certain French *philosophes*, who had grown frustrated with polite conversation as the prevailing mode of enlightened discourse, made Diogenes into their role model. In the figure of the Cynic, Jean D'Alembert, Denis Diderot, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, among others, saw the template for a new breed of public intellectual, one with considerably more bite and thus more power to effect change.[4] And yet, as these thinkers quickly discovered, the adoption of a rigidly Cynic stance could not deliver to them the full emancipatory power of critique. To the contrary, any man who took his Cynicism too far was invariably dismissed by polite society as nothing more than an angry, puffed-up railer, a man not guided by the light of reason, but rather by shameful desires and warped emotions.[5] Stung by this lesson in Cynicism's evaluative reversibility, admirers of Diogenes sought to retain the *ideal* of a Cynic stance while moderating its indecorousness (a concession to pragmatism that was especially imperative for those philosophers, like Diderot, who were dependent upon the patronage of wealthy aristocrats). According to Shea, this strategy of assuaging polite society led, in turn, to a bitter debate within the community of aspiring Cynics, who increasingly accused one another of being a "false Cynic"—of being, that is to say, the sort self-serving rationalizer who only *seems* to fight for the advancement of reason while in fact participating in reason's instrumentalization. In this second failure, we see the emergence of modern (lowercase) cynicism, and with it, the emergence of counter-Enlightenment critique.[6]

For Mazella, Cynicism's idealization, debasement, moderation, and finally, modernization, represent a process of sequential displacements. He therefore considers the lasting legacy of the Cynic Enlightenment to be the modern condition forever left in its wake, that ever-widening gyre

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of the cynical post-Enlightenment. As Mazella notes, the current omnipresence of modern cynicism, as well as philosophy's inability to escape its influence, is best captured by Peter Sloterdijk's definition of cynicism as "enlightened false consciousness":

> It is that modernized, unhappy consciousness, on which enlightenment has labored both successfully and in vain. It has learned its lessons in enlightenment, but it has not, and probably was not able to, put them into practice. Well-off and miserable at the same time, this consciousness no longer feels affected by any critique of ideology; its falseness is already reflexively buffered.[7]

Most obviously, enlightened false consciousness names the mind-set of modernity's self-preserving sellouts, the sort whose intellectual labor goes toward the buttressing of ideology, but it also names the mind-set of those post-Enlightenment thinkers who most strenuously engage in ideology *critique*. This is the horrible irony of the post-Enlightenment critical tradition, which seeks to expose the pervasiveness of instrumentalized reason and, in doing so, articulates a critique of ideology so all-encompassing that it casts even itself—even the critique of ideology—into doubt. The sterile hybrid of Enlightenment and counter-Enlightenment thought, post-Enlightenment critique seeks to emancipate us from ideology by rigorously disclosing the impossibility of our ever escaping instrumentality's contaminating influence, thus rendering itself impotent.

Mazella would have it that this "reflexively buffered" impasse marks the culmination of Cynicism's impact on Western thought, but as Shea has more recently argued, certain twentieth-century thinkers have responded to the crisis of modern cynicism by looking to ancient Cynicism for a cure. This is, as she notes, precisely the point of Sloterdijk's *Critique of Cynical Reason* (1983). Having identified Critical Theory's participation in "that modernized, unhappy consciousness, on which enlightenment has labored both successfully and in vain," Sloterdijk argues that a return to ancient Cynicism's "cheekiness" offers our best and only hope of unleashing the emancipatory power of critique and, hence, of achieving "the most communal world."[8] In a similar vein, Foucault—who spent much of his career critiquing the complicity between Enlightenment rationality and forms of domination—eventually sought to counterbalance his earlier work by considering "the ethics, the *ethos*, the practice of self, which would allow . . . games of power to be played with a minimum of domination."[9] This interest in "the critical function of philosophy" led

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Foucault, at the very end of his career, to endorse a particularly radical vision for philosophy as a way of life, one that finds its model not in the moderation of Socrates but rather in the revolutionary extremism of Diogenes (whom Plato once called "a Socrates gone mad"):[10]

> The Cynic is someone who, taking up the traditional themes of the true life in ancient philosophy, transposes them and turns them round into the demand and assertion of the need for an *other* life. And then, through the image and figure of the king of poverty, he transposes anew the idea of *an other* life into the theme of a life whose otherness must lead to the change of the world. An *other* life for an *other* world.[11]

Foucault turns quite decisively toward Cynicism in his final course of lectures at the Collège de France, and since the transcripts of these lectures have only recently been published, we should expect to see a wave of new scholarship that builds upon this idea of Cynicism as a vehicle for radical critique, as a "practice of combativity wherein lies the horizon of another world."[12] This return to a rigidly Cynic stance is of particular interest to this essay precisely because it brings the account I have been relating full circle. If the solution to a pervasively cynical world is to adopt a Diogenical way of life that is scandalous, that imparts its radical truth in and through a lived rejection of society's false values, then we are back to the problem of how easily that very stance can be viewed by others as self-delegitimizing. It is in the context of this present and ongoing dilemma—this potentially endless cycle of being attracted to the revolutionary promise of the Cynic stance only to be repulsed by its debased reversal—that I want to look more closely at early modern Diogeneana and at Shakespeare's particular response to it.

First popularized in England by Nicolas Udall's 1542 translation of Erasmus's *Apophthegmata* (a compilation of apothegms and anecdotes in which Diogenes figures more prominently than any other personage), Diogenes began increasingly to circulate as both a positive and a negative figure.[13] On the one hand, accounts of Diogenes brazenly mocking and humbling Alexander the Great led many to invoke Diogenes as the mascot for the period's ideal of an honest, forthright counselor. On the other hand, stories that emphasized Diogenes's shamelessness, his rejection of society, and his bristly antagonism toward others allowed the figure of the Cynic to be dismissively aligned with such early modern types as the parasite-jester, the melancholic, and the misanthrope.[14] At

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present, scholarship on Diogenes's early modern reception remains relatively thin on the ground, and what little work exists on the topic has made the mistake of treating the *moderated*, more palatable, version of the Cynic stance as this period's only valorized ideal.[15] To be sure, the majority of Diogenes's admirers sought to assimilate Cynic philosophy into the *ars rhetorica*, presenting him as a counselor whose deployment of frank speech could productively test the limits of, yet ultimately conform to, the governing precepts of courtly decorum and eloquence.[16] But, for a small minority of his supporters, the same stories of Diogenes confronting Alexander the Great suggested a compelling alternative to the pragmatics of free speech. According to this aspirational view, the Cynic way of life, above all others, would imbue its practitioner with unprecedented legitimacy and persuasive force, even when delivering truths to a hostile public or an unwilling sovereign interlocutor.

Shakespeare, as we will see, understands that these different reactions to Cynic critical activity are all the by-product of a practical imperative—to maximize one's communicative efficacy—that cannot come to grips with a specifically formal and aesthetic problem. I am referring to the problem of an aggressively free-speaking stance that can be viewed as either the most or the least tenable position from which to speak truth to power. Drawing our attention to both the beauty and the beastliness of the rigidly Cynic stance, Shakespeare invites us to get stuck, to pause at the very cusp of this reversibility, to dwell at the impossible juncture between antithetical perspectives; he invites us to see both sides of the Cynic coin in one instant, and, in so doing, to understand that the joke of its shifting value is on us. To achieve this effect, Shakespeare undertakes the characterization of a composite Cynic stance, and, as I will show, it is precisely this undertaking that gives form to the Shakespearean fool. Both *Timon of Athens* and *Twelfth Night* contain fools that bear the signature of a composite Cynic stance, yet this essay builds primarily toward an analysis of the Fool in *King Lear*. In *Lear*, Shakespeare makes a distinction between the problem of the truth-teller and the problem of composite Cynicism, between a practical dilemma, on the one hand, and a formal dilemma, on the other. The proposal of this distinction works to slow down, to unpack, the thorny problems posed by the adoption of Cynicism—not to eliminate them but to underscore their centrality.

Shakespeare poses the problem of the truth-teller in the famous opening scene of Lear's test of love, through the series of strategies that cyclically replace one another in response to Lear's demands. When Cordelia refuses to participate in a rhetorical game that structurally favors flattery over truth, she pegs her critique of the love test—and hence Lear's

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demand for it—on the assumption that absolute candor will invest her statements with the force of self-evidence. Yet this strategy quickly backfires, and it is precisely Cordelia's principled inflexibility that allows an offended Lear to discredit her:[17] "Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her" (Q 1.118).[18] Coming to Cordelia's defense, yet eager to avoid a similar fate, Kent endeavors to moderate his firm admonishment of Lear by combining his honesty with a healthy measure of praise.[19] But despite his concession to pragmatism, Kent's more courtly strategy of curbing his free speech does nothing to advance the goal of curbing Lear's poor judgment:[20]

> Kent. Royal Lear,
> Whom I have ever honoured as my king,
> Loved as my father, as my master followed,
> As my great patron thought in my prayers—
> Lear. The bow is bent and drawn, make from the shaft.
>
> (Q 1.28–32)

Now faced with decorum's insufficiency, its failure as a means of communicating truth to an unwilling king, Kent returns to the rigid stance initially held by Cordelia: "Be Kent unmannerly / When Lear is mad. . . . To plainness honour's bound / When majesty stoops to folly" (Q 1.134–38). As we can now predict, this return to the strategy of speaking freely and fearlessly does not go according to plan; instead of persuading Lear to "revoke [his] doom," Kent's "unmannerly" conduct prompts Lear to denounce him as an unruly subordinate who, like Cordelia before him, has displayed the degenerate fault of "strayed pride" (Q 1.152, 156).[21]

In his depiction of wise fools, Shakespeare isolates the formal problem that lies at the heart of Cordelia and Kent's practical dilemma—the problem, that is to say, of a single socio-ethical stance that can be viewed as the basis for achieving either maximal or minimal critical agency. Ultimately, I will argue that Shakespeare achieves his fullest characterization of the composite Cynic stance in a passage that is unique to the Quarto edition of *King Lear*, one in which the Fool reappropriates Lear's designation of him as "bitter" in order to define the formal paradox of his critical activity (Q 4.119). However, my brief reading of this passage will serve only as the conclusion to a much larger argument. In what follows, I seek first to substantiate the strand of Diogenes's early modern reception that views Cynic practice as the enabling condition for radical critique, the ethical basis for speaking truth to power in a way that transcends the pragmatic

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limits of free speech. After establishing the existence of this interpretive tradition—which sought to resist conflation with debased readings of Diogenes—I then turn to Shakespeare's appropriation of Diogeneana in *Timon of Athens*, *Twelfth Night*, and *King Lear*. In the first two plays, Shakespeare directly links the figure of the fool to the composite Cynic stance, and, in *King Lear*, he uses this preestablished affiliation to mark the mistake that Lear makes when identifying Tom o'Bedlam as a Cynic instead of the Fool. Finally, I turn to the scene in which Lear's Fool first makes his entrance, a scene that epitomizes Shakespeare's characterization of a composite Cynic stance, most vividly in a passage, unique to the Quarto edition of *King Lear*, wherein the Fool offers his response to Lear's accusation of bitterness.

Cynic *Parrhêsia*: The Politics and Aesthetics of the Extreme

In early modern England, the most widely cited anecdotes about Diogenes pertained to the Cynic philosopher's bold, irreverent exchanges with Alexander the Great, and one anecdote, in particular, came to emblematize Diogenes's unique capacity to deliver effective critique.[22] As the story goes, Alexander one day approached Diogenes lying on the ground near his tub and offered to grant the Cynic any favor of his choosing, to which Diogenes replied "Do not make shadoe betwene the sonne and me." (As Udall explains, the Cynic philosopher "was disposed to sonne hym selfe.")[23] In this anecdote, Diogenes rejects Alexander's offer of beneficence from his position of relative abjection, a condition that he deliberately cultivates and that he revalues as the ethical basis from which he can critique the comparative fraudulence of Alexander's personal and social values. If Alexander aspires to godlike status—to live up to the example of Heracles, from whom he claims to descend—then Diogenes offers a harsh reminder that Alexander can never replace the warmth and light that emanate from the sun. The implication is that Alexander's best efforts at securing power and distributing favor amount to only an interposing shadow, something that would deprive Diogenes of his true, basic needs.

For the most part, early modern writers understood Diogenes's exemplarity to lie in his skill at the rhetorical *game* of truth-telling, a game in which the sovereign interlocutor agrees to exercise magnanimous restraint on condition that the frank subordinate maintain just enough decorum to preserve his interlocutor's goodwill. Yet there remained a small minority of thinkers who saw something quite different in this anecdote. For

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the humanist who felt especially caught between the aspirations and the frustrations of critical activity, for the courtier who felt especially tired of playing games, the story of Diogenes confronting Alexander the Great held the promise of a new critical paradigm. As we will see, both Thomas Wilson and John Lyly belonged to this restless minority.

A decade after Udall had published his translation of the *Apophthegmes*, Thomas Wilson, the Elizabethan diplomat and Privy Councillor, relied on its depiction of Diogenes when defining *parrhêsia*, or free and fearless speech, in his *Arte of Rhetorique* (1553):

> Freeness of speache, is when we speake boldely, & without feare, euen to the proudest of them, whatsoeuer we please, or haue list to speake. Diogenes herein did excel, and feared no man when he saw just cause to say his mynde. This worlde wanteth suche as he was, and hath ouer many suche as neuer honest man was, that is to say, flatterers, fawners, and southers of mennes sayings.[24]

As David Colclough reminds us, Wilson's inclusion of *parrhêsia* in his book of rhetoric should be understood "in the context of religious and political change in England," a period during which both Protestants (like Wilson) and Catholics insisted on "the duty to speak the truth as an imperative of conscience."[25] Wilson therefore privileges a form of frank speech that many of his more courtly contemporaries deem counterproductive, and he does so out of an ethical duty to speak his mind, an obligation of conscience that he must discharge regardless of the consequences and despite the reception his truths may find among those of differing views. But if Wilson accepts the possibility that unmitigated frankness might undermine his critical effectiveness, I would argue that he cites Diogenes in order to exemplify another outcome, one in which the cultivation of a bold, fearless ethos imparts untold persuasive force to a person's frank speech. Thus, in the prologue to the 1560 edition of *The Arte of Rhetorique*, Wilson describes his conduct when arrested as a heretic in Rome (charged as such for authoring both *The Arte of Rhetorique* and *The Rule of Reason*, 1551): "I tooke such courage, and was so bolde, that the Iudges then did maruaile at my stoutnesse."[26] Faced with an ideological disparity great enough to disable the mediative operations of argument and debate, Wilson resorts to ethos and a display of his firm disposition as a means of authenticating his principles in the eyes of hostile interlocutors.

As we can see, Wilson not only valorizes an antirhetorical conception of Cynic *parrhêsia*, he also attempts to put Diogenical critique into

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practice. Yet his willingness to fearlessly challenge the authority of his Catholic judges is not (at least from an English perspective) as radical a proposition as it would be for him to challenge Queen Elizabeth, England's Alexander the Great. For an example of an Elizabethan courtier who tries to imagine this more radical application of Cynic *parrhêsia*, I turn to John Lyly, who dramatizes the encounter between Diogenes and Alexander in a way that is meant to have implications for Elizabeth and her court.[27]

In *A moste excellent Comedie of Alexander, Campaspe, and Diogenes*, performed before Elizabeth on 1 January 1584, Lyly contrasts Diogenes's successful exercise of freeness in speech with the restrained, tractable conduct of Alexander's other advisors. Set during the peaceful interlude separating the Theban and Persian wars, the play presents viewers with an Alexander resolved "in my court to have as many philosophers as I had in my camp soldiers. My court shall be a school wherein I will have used as great doctrine in peace as I did in war discipline."[28] To this end, Alexander invites a number of prominent philosophers to join his court, a sovereign request to which all but Diogenes graciously comply. These philosophers, headed by Aristotle, expect to counsel Alexander on matters pertaining to his rule, thus bringing him "as near to the gods in wisdom" as he already is "in dignity." Yet Alexander quickly disabuses Aristotle and the others of this notion by withholding from them full freedom of speech: "[I]n kings' causes I will not stand to scholars' arguments" (1.3.89–90). By depicting Alexander and his obedient coterie of philosophers as they negotiate the rhetorical terms of their free speech—what they can and cannot discuss *as if* equals—Lyly lays the groundwork for his understanding of Diogenes's quite different freedom of speech. In stark contrast with Aristotle and the others, Lyly's Diogenes does not depend upon Alexander's sanction and the precariousness of a merely rhetorical equality. Instead he speaks with the authority of a person whose way of life authenticates a new standard of sovereign autonomy, a person whose singular, self-authenticating ethos enables him to challenge Alexander so thoroughly on the subject of "king's causes" that the philosopher brazenly refutes a premise the others take for granted: that Alexander stands above other men and is "near to the gods . . . in dignity":

> Alexander. If Alexander have anything that may pleasure Diogenes, let me know, and take it.
> Diogenes. Then take not from me that you cannot give me, the light of the world.
> Alexander. What does thou want?

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> Diogenes. Nothing that you have.
> Alexander. I have the world at command.
> Diogenes. And I in contempt.
> Alexander. Thou shalt live no longer than I will.
> Diogenes. But I shall die whether you will or no.
>
> (2.2.155–64)

Ultimately, Alexander learns an important lesson from Diogenes about the nature and the limits of kingship—a lesson that enables him to resolve the love triangle between himself, Appelles, and Campaspe by renouncing his interest in Campaspe (whose love he cannot hope to command). Lyly includes Alexander's testy interdiction, when previously speaking to Aristotle ("in kings' causes I will not stand to scholars' arguments"), in order to destabilize readings that would credit Alexander's magnanimous restraint for the transformative effects of Diogenes's blunt, fearless admonishments.[29] For Lyly, Diogenes shows that it is possible to transact criticism successfully *without* a sovereign interlocutor's willing participation. By this view, Diogenes acquires full freedom of speech through the practice of a particularly robust way of life—the only way of life, in fact, to bring its practitioner into a state of *true* sovereignty, and therefore the only way of life to invest its practitioner with the power of sovereign truth. When Diogenes critiques Alexander, he speaks with the force of an incontrovertible assertion.[30]

Following G. K. Hunter, David Bevington contends that, because of Lyly's strong humanist and courtly commitments, he would never have resorted personally to Cynic *parrhêsia*, meaning that we should not take Lyly to be endorsing Cynicism as a viable critical practice: "Diogenes is not . . . Lyly's self-portrait. The play itself demonstrates that Lyly is prepared to flatter monarchs when they are doing well."[31] This is a valid point, yet in a slight turn toward self-contradiction, Bevington goes on to concede that antipragmatic Cynicism constitutes a legitimate part of Lyly's whole: "The position of Diogenes is one extreme of the composite man. Lyly examines the value of unrestrained criticism, but sets it in debate against conflicting realities of court life."

I agree with the first part of Bevington's concession but disagree with the second. On the one hand, the notion of Lyly as a "composite man" corroborates my claim that Diogenes functions as an aspirational and unrealistic projection of Lyly himself. But, on the other hand, I take issue with the assertion that Lyly pits his ideal of an unrestrainable critic "in debate against conflicting realities of court life." My objection to this latter claim is

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twofold and pertains to the notable *absence* of debate between Diogenes and his various interlocutors.[32] First, in his depiction of Diogenes confronting Alexander, Lyly presents Cynicism as an ethics that imbues its practitioner with the ability to transcend the pragmatic limits of free speech. By this view, Lyly's Diogenes stands for a form of truth-telling that manages to circumvent the communicative arena of argument and debate; his is a mode of critical activity so utterly uncompromising that it claims all legitimacy for itself while yielding none to opposing points of view.

Assuming that this debateless mode of critique actually works—as it does for Diogenes, when addressing Alexander—then it does not pass the test of logic to say that Lyly sets this critical practice "in debate against" the very realities that Diogenes effectively circumvents. Second, the tendency to dismiss Diogenes—demonstrated in the play by everyone *except* Alexander—hangs upon *the very same* absence of debate. This is evident in the reply Diogenes receives subsequent to his very first line of the play, a rejoinder tellingly voiced by Plato, popularly considered to be Diogenes's chief philosophical rival: "Thou takest as great pride to be peevish as others do glory to be virtuous" (1.3.132–33). In a dismissive gesture that should by now be familiar, Plato interprets Diogenes's candid denunciation of him as incontrovertible evidence of the Cynic's faulty disposition, his peevish pride.

I do not see Lyly's intention and self-reflexivity in the juxtaposition of these two assessments of Cynic *parrhêsia* (as if evidence of Diogenes's critical failures were intended to signal Lyly's skepticism toward the Cynic philosopher's one spectacular success). Rather, it seems to me that Lyly's aspirational attachment to a transcendent mode of Cynic critique leads him to maintain a stark distinction between a virtuous Diogenes and this figure's peevishly proud alter ego. Lyly enforces this distinction by locating Cynicism at two evaluative extremes (either it is absolutely potent, as with Alexander, or absolutely impotent, as with Plato), and he further magnifies the schismatic effects of this irreconcilability by relegating the two faces of Cynicism to discrete, nonoverlapping units of his play.

I want to suggest that Lyly and Wilson belong to an underrecognized strand of Cynicism's reception history that sought to flesh out the idea of an unrestrainable mode of critique, a project that entailed an especially vigilant segregation of Cynicism's valorized and debased views.[33] There is, of course, an inherent irony to this project, for the articulation of the most critically potent Cynic stance also gave rise to its converse image, meaning that the more certain thinkers strove to depict a Diogenes who transcends argument, the easier it became for others to look at this valorized stance only to see its ugly antithesis. Ultimately, this strand of

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Diogenes's reception history has had the effect of formalizing Cynicism's problem of perspective, a problem that continues to drive the legacy of Cynicism to this day. Much in the way that we perceive the duck–rabbit illusion as being either a duck or a rabbit, our perception of rigid Cynicism is now governed by those structures of thought that limit our picture of the Cynic stance to only one perspective at a time. However, as we will see, Shakespeare responds to the formal convergence of his period's most valorized and debased interpretations of Diogenes by developing a more insistently composite formation of Cynicism's two faces, one that resists his viewers' inclination to resolve this doubled image into a single aspect.[34]

Characterizing the Composite Cynic

Shakespeare most obviously reflects upon Cynicism through the figure of Apemantus, a character in *Timon of Athens* who is described in the dramatis personae as "a churlish philosopher."[35] Though never explicitly identified as a Cynic, Apemantus discloses his philosophical commitments through an antagonistic stance toward others and an insistence on "plain dealing" (1.1.221). Moreover, the rejoinders of his stung interlocutors point to Cynicism's etymology, which stems from the Greek adjective for doglike, *kynikos*: "You're a dog"; "Away, unpeaceable dog, or I'll spurn thee hence!" (1.1.203, 270).[36] Though Apemantus plays an important role as a foil for Timon (the play's misanthropic protagonist), our more immediate concern is the conspicuous trouble to which Shakespeare goes in order to forge a connection between Apemantus and the play's professional fool, whose stage presence extends for a brief 78 lines in act 2, scene 2. Apemantus and the Fool enter and exit together, and they share the duty of disparaging the three servants who wait to collect money from Timon on behalf of their masters. This tag-teamed volley of criticism ends with the kind of dialogue that unapologetically explains its own agenda:

> Varro's Servant. Thou art not altogether a fool.
> Fool. Nor thou altogether a wise man. As much foolery as I have, so much wit thou lack'st.
> Apemantus. That answer might have become Apemantus.
>
> (2.2.118–22)

In reciprocal fashion, the Fool likens himself to Apemantus when the departing Cynic instructs his associate to withdraw: "I do not always

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follow lover, elder brother, and woman; sometime the philosopher" (2.2.125–26). As their brief collaboration comes to an end, each currish figure reflects on the overlapping of their offices, thereby establishing a Shakespearean equation between the Cynic and the wise fool as types. And yet, even as Apemantus and the Fool turn toward each other and acknowledge that their modes of conduct reflect a shared critical mission, they also turn *against* each other and engage in mirrorlike gestures of characterological diminishment. Apemantus's ironic "might have" in his observation of likeness implies that the correspondence between the Fool's jesting and his own is merely accidental. And the Fool, besides suggesting that he is guided by philosophical wisdom, mocks Apemantus by equating him to accepted figures of folly, like the elder brother who precedes the younger (and wiser) sibling in many parables. Pointedly, each character sees in the other the two faces of Cynicism that Lyly works so hard to keep apart.

Chronologically, *Timon of Athens* is the last of the plays in which Shakespeare links Cynicism to his depiction of wise fools. I begin at the end, so to speak, because Shakespeare presents his agenda most explicitly in his pairing of Apemantus and the Fool, a character that flits into and out of existence for no discernible purpose other than to serve as Shakespeare's chosen tool for reflecting upon the composite Cynic type. In *Twelfth Night* and *King Lear*, Shakespeare achieves a similar effect through his targeted citation of Diogeneana, which he links to his wise fools in such a way as to align them with a composite Cynic stance.

In *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare's citation of Diogeneana tellingly coincides with Feste's act of defining the nature and the purpose of his foolery. At the beginning of act 3, scene 1, Viola comes across Feste playing a musical instrument and enters into conversation with him on the topic of his profession: "Save thee, friend, and thy music. Dost thou live by thy tabor?"[37] Initially at a disadvantage, Viola quickly learns from Feste how to "dally nicely with words" (3.1.13), and, armed with this skill, she eventually succeeds at identifying Feste's vocation, or so she thinks:

> Viola. Art not thou Lady Olivia's fool?
> Feste. No indeed, sir, the Lady Olivia has no folly, she will keep no fool, sir, till she be married, and fools are as like husbands as pilchards are to herrings—the husband's the bigger. I am indeed not her fool, but her corrupter of words.
>
> (3.1.27–31)

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Because Feste has been instructing Viola in the art of wordplay, we are invited to read his self-definition as yet another playful formulation, as a formal nonequivalence that happens to equate. In this sense, to be a fool *is* to be a "corrupter of words"; it is to play an active role in loosening semantic "bonds" such that words become "rascals" (3.1.18–19). By calling himself a "corrupter of words," then, Feste in effect presents himself as the rascal of all rascals. He defines the artificial fool as someone whose verbal activity constitutively evades interpretive clarity, a type of person whom others either should not or cannot take seriously.

Given Feste's trivializing self-definition, it is especially noteworthy that his preference of the title "corrupter of words" references an anecdote in which Diogenes defines the nature and purpose of Cynic critical activity—an activity, moreover, in which Diogenes corrupts a word in order to *protect* its meaning from abuse:

> The scholastical exercitacion and conferryng of *Plato* called in greeke διατριβή [*diatribê*], *Diogenes* by deprauyng and corruptyng the woorde called κατατριβή [*katatribê*], y^{t} is, myspendyng of muche good labour & tyme, because that *Plato* beeyng sequestred & exempted from the practike liuyng emong menne abrode in y^{e} worlde, did spend all his dayes & tyme in disputacions of woordes, wher as *Diogenes* liuyng emonges y^{e} thickest of the worlde abrode, had more mynde and affection to liue philosophically, that is, accordyng to perfecte vertue, then onely in woordes to dispute & reason therof.[38]

In this story, Diogenes mounts a critique of Plato's philosophical enterprise by corrupting the term used to describe Plato's school: *diatribê*, a place for "scholastical exercitacion and conferryng." Deriving the word's meaning from the verb τρίβειν (*tribein*), which literally means "to rub," and the prefix *dia*, which indicates duration, Plato uses *diatribê* to name his school as a place where one goes to spend time "rubbing away" at ideas, concepts, and philosophical quandaries. By contrast, *katatribein* modifies the verb "to rub" with a prefix that means "down," and Diogenes calls Plato's school a *katatribe* in order to suggest that these men do not "rub continuously" at the object of their attention so much as they "rub it down," much in the way that a piece of wood forever burnished by sandpaper will eventually cease to exist.[39]

Though Diogenes's pun is a deft play on words, it serves to maintain rather than undo the meaning of *diatribê.* According to Diogenes, Plato's

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approach to philosophy has always been a *katatribe* (what Udall loosely translates as a "myspendyng of muche good labour & tyme"), whereas Diogenes demonstrates his commitment "to liue philosophically" by practicing a way of life that fashions his very person into a *diatribê*, an abrasive object that continuously rubs away at society's false values. Diogenes therefore counters the empty activity undertaken by the members of Plato's school, who philosophize "onely in woordes," by insisting that true *diatribê*—now synonymous with the practice of Cynicism—affects the world not through words but deeds. Diogenes presents Cynic *diatribê* as a socio-ethical stance that enables him to translate his lived philosophy into concrete worldly effects, to challenge more forcefully the falsely held values of individuals and of society at large.[40]

Restored to our view, Shakespeare's reference to this particular anecdote can once again do the work of locating Feste at the point of intersection between two contradictory assessments of Diogenes's critical activity, a mode of critical practice that can be heralded as extraordinarily effective, on the one hand, and lambasted for being utterly inconsequential, the mere antics of a parasite-jester who has renounced all claims to seriousness, on the other. By having Feste define his foolery both in terms of its maximal and of its minimal critical efficacy, Shakespeare achieves a composite Cynic stance that resists assimilation to one or the other of these categorical judgments.

To be clear, the structural fact of Feste's composite Cynicism does not prevent an observer from deeming Feste a highly skilled pragmatist, an interpretation of his craft that must undoubtedly strike readers as being more obvious than my reading of composite Cynicism can ever hope to be. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the obviousness of viewing Feste as a tactful provocateur need not invalidate my claims and, indeed, may go some way toward proving them. As Richard Strier would remind us, there are "structures of and in particular texts that produce 'bafflement,' that surprise or puzzle the reader . . . and that in some sense resist assimilation to totalizing interpretive strategies."[41] One must attend with great care to structures of this kind in order to feel their resistance; and, in the absence of such care, one feels no resistance at all. I take Shakespeare to be making precisely this point when he shows how easy it is for Viola to understand Feste's foolery as a modified version of courtliness:

> This fellow is wise enough to play the fool,
> And to do that well craves a kind of wit.
> He must observe their mood on whom he jests,

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> The quality of persons, and the time,
> And, like the haggard, check at every feather
> That comes before the eye.
>
> (3.1.53–57)

Viola's assessment of Feste—which we might be tempted to discuss as if it were Shakespeare's assessment as well—will only seem obvious if we share her assumption that Feste subscribes to the pragmatist's ideal, that precarious and presumably universal goal of maximizing one's freedom and agency within a world of practical constraints. However, Shakespeare does not present Feste as a pragmatic social actor in this moment of Diogenical citation. Instead, he composes Feste out of the two evaluations of Cynic critical activity on which courtiers of his period were beginning to cathect as visions of an antipragmatic heaven and hell. By combining the otherworldly prospects of an unrestrainable critical agency and of an oppositional posture that provokes its own dismissal, Shakespeare works to *characterize* the composite Cynic stance. In other words, Shakespeare turns to composite Cynicism in order to fashion an "impossible" character, one that presses viewers to recognize the purely formal operations of character, as such, while at the same time signaling its status as the placeholder for an embodied social agent, a character in the Aristotelian sense. This act of characterization results in a resistant structure that the audience should notice, even if Viola does not.

Shakespeare stages a more elaborate lesson on the reading and the misreading of the composite Cynic stance when he makes reference to Diogenes in *King Lear*. The chief citational moment takes place out on the heath, where the sight of Edgar (disguised as the pitiful beggar Tom o'Bedlam) prompts Lear to reflect on the idea of a human being stripped of all comforts and accessories: "Thou art the thing itself. Unaccommodated man is no more but such a *poor, bare, forked animal* as thou art" (Q 11.90–92, emphasis added). Lear's Cynic identification with Tom, rather than the Fool, corresponds to Lear's misreading of the anecdote from which he quotes, an anecdote in which Diogenes once again defines the nature of his Cynic practice by defending the accuracy of a word's meaning:

> *Plato* had thus deffined a manne: A manne is a liuethyng with twoo feete, hauyng no fethers. And when the scholares of *Plato* had made signes and tokens of well allowyng thesame diffinicion, Diogenes brought foorth into the

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> schole, a cocke pulled naked out of all his fethers both great & smal, saying: loe, here is Plato his manne. Wherupon it was added to the diffinicion, hauyng brode nailles, for that no byrdes haue any suche.[42]

In offering up a defeathered chicken as an adequate example of "Plato his manne," Diogenes mounts a parodic assault upon the very notion that Platonic dialogue brings its practitioners into contact with worldly truths. The suggestion is that Plato and his disciples are no closer to being real men than is the chicken that they have reasoned to be their equal. By contrast, Diogenes lives up to the title of "manne" by embodying Cynic *diatribê*, an authentic and therefore abrasive way of life that exposes the fraudulence of Plato and his school (that place where lesser beings collectively delude themselves through "disputacions of woordes").[43]

Shakespeare cites this particular anecdote because it already contains the resistant structure that he is working to locate in his characterization of wise fools. In addition to depicting the vitality and robustness of Cynic critical activity, this anecdote also demonstrates the practical inefficacy of Diogenes's blunt critique. Though Diogenes offers a challenge to Plato's entire philosophical enterprise, Plato and his circle quite effortlessly assimilate Diogenes's Cynic *diatribê* into the discursive field of their Platonic *diatribê*. In other words, they interpret Diogenes's global critique as merely a rude and inelegant observation that their definition requires more specificity: "Wherupon it was added to the diffinicion, hauyng brode nailles, for that no byrdes haue any suche." Taken as a whole, then, this anecdote asks readers to attend to a form of critical activity that is as aggressive and far-reaching as it is ineffectual; it presents Diogenes as the practitioner of a uniquely incongruous way of life, one that figures as both a continuously abrasive mode of social critique and also a complete waste of time.

Associating Cynicism with "Poor Tom," Lear arrives at an understanding of Cynic practice that does not correspond to the anecdote he cites. For Lear, the "poor, bare, forked animal" does not refer to Plato's chicken-man but rather to Lear's new ethical ideal of an "unaccommodated man," a practitioner of Cynic asceticism who achieves virtue through the active embrace of poverty. This is a noble ideal, and Shakespeare treats it as such, but he also builds irony into Lear's interpretation by having the landless king draw his Cynic inspiration from the language of Plato's flawed definition of man. Taking Lear at his word, the few critics who note Shakespeare's reference to Diogenes have endorsed Lear's admiration of Cynic asceticism because it corroborates a redemptive

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reading of the play's tragic king.[44] E. M. M. Taylor, for example, understands Lear's moment of Cynic identification in the context of the play's overarching moral "that a man who grossly overvalues material things and the outward trappings of state, virtue, and affection must be schooled by disaster and suffering into truer, more adequate, and more charitable assessments."[45] In a similar vein, Jane Donawerth, asserts that Tom-as-Cynic suits Lear best as a schoolmaster in the lesson of renunciation: "Lear's madness in calling Poor Tom 'philosopher' is a wise one: he is looking for someone to teach him to bear suffering."[46] By this view, Lear's attempt to disrobe at the sight of Tom o'Bedlam—"Off, off, you lendings!" (Q 11.92)—stems from a newly kindled desire to follow the example of the scantily clad Diogenes, who once discarded his wooden bowl as "a thyng superfluous" upon seeing a boy eat food out of a hollow round of bread.[47] Whereas Lear previously sought to maintain his retinue of personal attendants by claiming that the human condition is one of necessary excess—"O, reason not the need! Our basest beggars / Are in the poorest thing superfluous"—he now follows an example that prompts him to voluntarily "shake the superflux" (Q 7.417–18, 11.32).

By having Lear refer to the story of Plato's man, Shakespeare manages to juxtapose a composite Cynic stance with a version of Cynic practice that is more politically actionable, one that foregoes Diogenes's critical mission and instead focuses entirely upon an ethics of material renunciation. As if to make room for both avenues of interpretation, Shakespeare signals the availability of two Cynic figures—one ascetic, the other (impotently) critical—by way of Lear's confused address of Tom as a potential counselor of variously Greek origin: "Let me talk with this philosopher," "I'll talk a word with this most learnèd Theban," "Noble philosopher, your company," "Come, good Athenian." (Q 11.131, 134, 152, 157). As F. G. Butler has argued, Lear's designation of Tom as a "learned Theban" refers to Crates of Thebes, a pupil of Diogenes who in turn mentored Zeno, the founder of Stoicism.[48] Whereas Diogenes would take every opportunity to criticize those around him, Crates practiced a less antagonistic brand of Cynicism that focused more exclusively on acquiring peace of mind through the embrace of poverty, a proto-Stoic attitude to which we can see Lear attempting to conform. By contrast, Lear's later designation of Tom as a "good Athenian"—which R. A. Foakes identifies as a reference to Diogenes—alerts us to something like an interpretive road not taken. It points our attention (though not Lear's) to a more critically oriented (and also more paradoxical) brand of Cynicism that Shakespeare principally deploys in his characterization of Lear's Fool.[49]

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In making this claim, I am first of all suggesting that Shakespeare subordinates Lear's Fool to the same logic of expediency that he employs in his brief depiction of the Fool in *Timon of Athens*, a character that enables Shakespeare to reflect upon, and thus to characterize, the composite Cynic stance. By this view, it is no coincidence that Lear's Fool drops out of the play shortly after Shakespeare makes reference to the story of Plato's man, for this anecdote's resistant figuration of Diogenes marks the reflective end of the Fool's Cynic beginning.

The Bitter Fool

By citing the story of Plato's man, Shakespeare pointedly tropes upon the basic circumstances of his play's tragic *dénouement*. Like the love test, this anecdote stages an encounter between a figure of authority (Plato), his flatterers (Plato's followers, who make "signes and tokens of well allowyng" their master's definition), and an indecorously frank critic (Diogenes). Yet the story of Plato's man does not entirely echo the events and consequences that surround Lear's test of love, for Diogenes's blunt criticism—though it proves to be just as ineffective as Cordelia's and Kent's freedom of speech—does not result in his banishment from the Platonic community. In this respect, Shakespeare's allusion to Diogenes most properly corresponds to his characterization of Lear's Fool, a figure that Shakespeare first calls into being in order to stage a Diogenical revision of the play's inaugural scene:

> Fool. How now, nuncle? Would I had two coxcombs and two daughters.
> Lear. Why, my boy?
> Fool. If I gave them my living I'd keep the coxcombs myself. There's mine; beg another off thy daughters.
> Lear. Take heed, sirrah—the whip.
>
> (Q 4.91–96)

Just before Kent embarks upon his banishment, he asserts that Regan and Goneril's "large speeches" must still be confirmed by their "deeds," and here we see the Fool make a similar point from his vantage of retrospection (Q 1.171); he suggests that Lear has made himself doubly foolish by exchanging his kingdom for a matching set of hollow proclamations. By having the Fool mount precisely this critique, Shakespeare identifies this

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encounter as a rewriting of the previous confrontation between Kent and his king. Accordingly, Shakespeare has an offended Lear threaten the Fool with punishment, just as Lear once threatened to punish Kent for his forthright defense of Cordelia: "The bow is bent and drawn; make from the shaft" (Q 1.1.132). In this context, it is noteworthy that Shakespeare does not entirely reproduce the play's foundational tragic event, for the Fool's refusal to heed Lear's whip does not result in a lashing. And yet, one would be hard put to say whether the Fool's exercise of free speech falls into the category of failure or success.

Furthering this characterization of a composite Cynic stance, Shakespeare has the Fool counter Lear's warning with a Diogenical rejoinder. Whereas Kent responds to Lear's threats by insisting upon the political necessity of his plainspoken resistance—"To plainness honour's bound / When majesty stoops to folly"—the Fool turns aside the prospect of punishment by observing that all acts of candid admonishment, including his own, inevitably result in communicative failure: "Truth is a dog to kennel. He must be whipped out when Lady the brach may stand by the fire and stink" (Q 1.1.137–38, 1.4.97–98). Here, Shakespeare aligns the Fool with certain anecdotes in which Diogenes enacts a global critique of his society by publicly dramatizing his condition of perpetual critical inefficacy. In one such story, Diogenes walks the streets of Athens with a lit candle in broad daylight, explaining when questioned by passersby that he is searching for a man.[50] This anecdote registers Diogenes's radical critique of his society—he suggests that no one he has ever encountered lives up to the title of "man"—but it also presents readers with the challenge of reconciling the obvious ambitiousness of Diogenes's critique with what must inevitably be seen as his practical inconsequentiality: who, after all, will heed a man using a candle in broad daylight, or one conversing with statues (as he does in another anecdote) in order to dramatize the limits of his discourse with men?[51] These anecdotes offer a template for the Fool's composite Cynic gesture, wherein he mounts a trenchant critique of Lear precisely by admitting that he can do no such thing. In light of Cordelia and Kent's earlier banishment, the Fool is of course right to assert that free speakers will always be "whipped out" while flatterers are allowed to "stand by the fire and stink," and it is an irony inherent to the Fool's truthfulness that his observation of this fact loses all critical potency upon the instant of its frank utterance. Shakespeare thus locates the Fool's critical activity within the enactment of a logical paradox and, in doing so, works to frustrate his viewers' ability to resolve the Fool's composite Cynicism into the aspect of a critical practice that is either singularly effective or constitutively ineffective.

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One might understandably view this reading with a degree of skepticism. Why, for example, might it not be the case that the Fool speaks with knowing irony, announcing his critical impotence at precisely the moment when he is being the most incisive and critically forceful? This is a valid question insofar as it conforms to Viola's understanding of the courtier-like means by which Feste negotiates his critical agency. However, Shakespeare works to counter this line of thought by setting the Fool in direct contrast with Kent, who reenters Lear's service (only moments before the Fool's appearance) under the assumed identity of Caius, a man who "can keep counsel" and "deliver plain messages bluntly" (Q 4.28–29). Kent's assertion of plainspokenness calls to mind his earlier act of transgressive honesty, but he now claims as his chief characteristic the ability to exercise tact (to always "keep counsel"). Though Kent will deliver blunt missives to the interlocutor of Lear's choosing, he promises never again to breach all bounds of decorum when addressing Lear himself. The larger implication of Kent's return is clear: in order to rejoin his king, Kent agrees to loosen his commitment to absolute Truth so as to inhabit a more livable socio-ethical stance, one that affords him the greatest *realizable* degree of critical agency, given the many practical limits that the world imposes upon his free speech.

Lear's Fool represents an impracticable (but characterizable) alternative to Kent's virtuous pragmatism, and Shakespeare flags this for his viewers by having the Fool materialize just as Lear agrees to employ the disguised, newly discrete Kent. More precisely, the Fool gives a form to *both* of the alternatives to the pragmatics of free speech. He is at once the brave and unassailably correct counselor and also a typologized humors-character, the sort of person whose spleen speaks for him and who therefore has nothing legitimate to say. Shakespeare works to disclose the formal coincidence of these divided Cynic types when he once more has the Fool recall Lear to the scene of sovereign renunciation, an encounter that similarly positions the Fool within a modified reenactment of Kent's communicative failure:

> Fool. Can you make no use of nothing, uncle?
> Lear. Nothing can be made out of nothing.
> Fool. [*to* Kent] Prithee, tell him so much the rent of his land comes to. He will not believe a fool.
> Lear. A bitter fool.
>
> (Q 4.115–19)

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By way of an opening riddle, the Fool draws Lear into a refrain of his earlier answer to a noncompliant Cordelia: "Nothing can come of nothing" (Q 1.79). Seizing upon this verbal recurrence, the Fool connects Lear's past rejection of frank speech to his present lack of material support, a lack that Lear has brought upon himself by exchanging his kingdom for Regan's and Goneril's glitteringly empty words. Once again, Shakespeare puts the Fool in the position of delivering an undeliverable critique, of disclosing to Lear that he rejects honest censure while embracing silver-tongued praise, and the Fool accomplishes this by engaging in yet another Diogenes-like dramatization of his own critical inefficacy. With an ironic flourish, Shakespeare has the Fool entreat a disguised Kent to serve as his frank middleman, insisting that he cannot deliver his critique personally because Lear "will not believe a fool." Without doubt, the Fool's comment stings Lear deeply. But while viewers may be tempted to interpret this composite Cynic gesture as a sign of the Fool's robust critical agency, Shakespeare frustrates this simplifying impulse by way of Lear's delegitimizing assessment of the Fool. Just as Lear denounces Cordelia and Kent for being proud, he now accuses the Fool of being bitter.

Interestingly, Shakespeare achieves his most resistant figuration of the composite Cynic stance in a passage that appears in only the Quarto edition of *King Lear*. As Robert Hornback notes, in both the Quarto and the Folio texts, the Fool takes mention of his bitterness as an opportunity to further engage with Lear: "Dost know the difference, my boy, between a bitter fool and a sweet fool?" (Q 4.120, F 1.4.122).[52] But whereas the Folio Fool responds to Lear's "No, lad, teach me," by oddly shifting to another riddle entirely—"Nuncle, give me an egg and I'll give thee two crowns"—the Quarto Fool goes on to position himself as the bitter alternative to sweet counsel.[53] Thus we once again find ourselves with a version of the play's original opposition between persuasive flattery and ineffective frankness:

> Fool. [*sings*] That lord that counselled thee
> To give away thy land,
> Come, place him here by me;
> Do thou for him stand.
> The sweet and bitter fool
> Will presently appear,
> The one in motley here,
> The other found out there.
> Lear. Dost thou call me fool, boy?

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> Fool. All thy other titles thou hast given away. That thou wast born with.
> Kent. [*to* Lear] This is not altogether fool, my lord.
> Fool. No, faith; lords and great men will not let me. If I had a monopoly out, they would have part on't, and ladies too, they will not let me have all the fool to myself—they'll be snatching. Give me an egg, nuncle, and I'll give thee two crowns.
>
> (Q 4.123–38)

As an act of frank critique, the riddle makes explicit Lear's double duty as both the recipient and the supplier of counsel, standing both for himself—the king—and for "That lord that counselled" him. The Fool's odd construction leaves it unclear whether the sweet fool names the person who *gives* fawning advice or a person who readily *takes* it, an ambiguity that draws attention to Lear's closed economy of counsel—that is, to the fact that Lear has counseled himself into destitution. The Fool renders visible, in retrospect, the fact that Lear decides to "shake all cares and business off our state" *prior* to Goneril and Regan's flattery or Cordelia's jarringly frank speech; and although Lear promises his "largest bounty" to the daughter who professes to love him most, he demonstrates the persuasive limits of Goneril's and Regan's obsequiousness by only giving them their predetermined thirds. This is not to suggest that flattery plays no part in Lear's conduct but rather to emphasize his request for adulation over his elder daughters' production of it, an orchestration of the ensuing exchange that substantiates the Fool's conflation of Lear with those who validate his intentions. If Lear meets the requirements of the sweet fool, it is because he displays a lack of self-knowledge: he does not recognize that the advice he likes best is always of the sort that corroborates his self-image.

Though Lear understands the Fool's jest enough to identify himself as its target—"Dost thou call me fool, boy?"—the distinction being drawn between the sweet and the bitter fool entirely escapes him. It is therefore a matter of profound irony that the Fool wholly substantiates his critique *of* Lear by failing to convey that critique *to* Lear. Whereas Lear demonstrates his sweetness most conclusively when he fails to see that which the Fool bitterly endeavors to show him, the Fool manifests his bitterness most decisively when he identifies Lear's pathologizing dismissal of him as the definitive feature of his critical activity. If the Fool persists in the failure to prove his point, it is because an unconditional and indefinite

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demonstration of his failure serves as *the best and only means of proving his point*. Here, Shakespeare achieves his most resistant characterization of the composite Cynic stance, for the Fool's critical activity takes the ethical form of a means to an end even as it marks the absence of any means and the lack of any end. Here, too, the Cynic ideal of an antirhetorical counselor and the debased Cynic archetypes of the misanthrope and the zany are shown to coexist in an irresolvable formation. The result is an especially ambivalent configuration of Shakespeare's "bitter fool."

In the end, Shakespeare does not, indeed cannot, overcome our cognitive limits. No matter how resistant its structure, composite Cynicism will always be filtered through that mechanism of our apprehension that ensures we perceive only one of its faces at a time. Nevertheless, Shakespeare seems to understand that—when it comes to the politics and aesthetics of free speech—we must at least attempt to resist the irresistible, to think beyond the interpretive procedures that bring one of Cynicism's two aspects into view only by being blind, in that moment, to the other. Shakespeare's bitter fools serve to destabilize our attachment to a single perception of free and fearless speech, to lure us into a heightened experience of our own evaluative instability. By encapsulating a composite Cynic stance in a single figure, the wise fool, Shakespeare poses this problem of perspective so inexorably that attentive viewers will be moved to wrestle with it to the point of exhaustion. Thus wearied, careful readers of Shakespeare will be wary of Cynicism's two faces, lest the push and pull of their antirhetorical aspirations and fears forever lead them on a not-so-merry chase.

David Hershinow is a lecturer in the Princeton Writing Program who specializes in Renaissance literature. He is currently completing a book on the intellectual history of Cynicism and Shakespeare's sustained engagement with the figure of Diogenes the Cynic.

NOTES

1. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. R. D. Hicks (1925; repr., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), book 6, para. 69.
2. Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth: The Government of Self and Others II*, trans. Graham Burchell (1984; repr., New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 174.
3. See Heinrich Niehues-Pröbsting, "The Modern Reception of Cynicism: Diogenes in the Enlightenment," in *The Cynics: The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and Its Legacy*, ed. R. Bracht Branham and Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 329–65; David Mazella, *The Making of Modern Cynicism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007); and Louisa Shea, *The Cynic Enlightenment: Diogenes in the Salon* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

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4. Similarly, Niehues-Pröbsting asserts that Diogenes rose to prominence in this period because he was seen to exemplify such Enlightenment ideals as "the freedom from prejudice and the open criticism of secular and religious authorities; the autonomy of the individual and the separation of morality from religious constraints; universal philanthropy [*Menschenliebe*] and cosmopolitanism" ("Modern Reception of Cynicism," 332). Shea (*Cynic Enlightenment*) simply expands on this insight by insisting that Diogenes exemplified an *uncompromising* commitment to these ideals.

5. Niehues-Pröbsting, Mazella, and Shea have each rehearsed this dynamic as it played in the characterological dismissal of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. But as Shea has persuasively shown, Diderot's lifelong cathexis on the figure of Diogenes offers an equally good, if not superior, example of Cynicism's susceptibility to evaluative reversal (see Niehues-Pröbsting, "Modern Reception of Cynicism," 344–45; Mazella, *Making of Modern Cynicism*, 110–75; and Shea, *Cynic Enlightenment*, 94–105, 45–73).

6. In this essay, I follow the convention of using the uppercase and the lowercase as a means of distinguishing between ancient Cynicism from modern cynicism.

7. Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, trans. Michael Eldred (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 5; first published in German in 1983.

8. Ibid., 105, 207.

9. Michel Foucault's articulation of this claim, couched as it is in relative terms, appears in an interview that was held in January 1984, just prior to Foucault's turn toward Cynicism (see Foucault, "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom: An Interview with Michel Foucault on January 20, 1984," in *The Final Foucault*, trans. J. D. Gauthier, ed. James Bernauer and David Rasmussen [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991], 1–20, quotation on 18).

10. Diogenes, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, book 6, para. 63.

11. Foucault, *Courage of Truth*, 287.

12. Michel Foucault, *Le courage de la vérité: Le gouvernement de soi et des autres II* [The courage of truth: government of self and others II], ed. Fréderic Gros (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 2009), 264. My translation is excerpted from the following:

> Et on peut dire, tres brièvement, dans ces conditions que le cynisme non seulement a poussé le thème de la vraie vie jusqu'à [l'enverser en] thème de la vie scandaleusement autre, mais il a posé cette altérité de la vie autre, pas simplement comme le choix d'une vie différente, bienheureuse et souveraine, mais comme la pratique d'une combativité à l'horizon de laquelle il y a un monde autre.

I depart from Burchell's translation in order to convey more faithfully Foucault's interest in a *practice of combativity*, what Burchell translates as "an open militantism which is the critique of real life."

Six years after the publication of these lectures, and four years after their translation into English, we are only just now seeing the publication of scholarship interested in taking up Foucault's idea that the Cynic way of life constitutes a practical path forward for avant-garde philosophy and radical politics. See, for example, Alex Demirović, "The Politics of Truth: For a Different Way of Life," in *Gramsci and Foucault: A Reassessment*, ed. David Kreps (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2015), 11–30.

13. See Desiderius Erasmus, *The Apophthegmes of Erasmus*, trans. Nicolas Udall (London, 1542). Incidental references to Diogenes are too common in the period to catalog, but the following Renaissance English books attend to Diogenes either as their sole subject or as a figure of major importance: Sir Thomas Elyot, *A Dialogue betweene Lucian and*

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Diogenes of the life harde and sharpe, and of the life tendre and delicate (undated); William Baldwin, *A Treatise of Moral Philosophy* (1547, 1555); Ulpian Fulwell, *The . . . Eygth liberall Science: Entituled, Ars Adulandi, The Arte of Flatterie* (1576); John Lily, *A most excellent Comedie of Alexander, Campaspe, and Diogenes* (1584); Thomas Lodge, *Catharos: Diogenes in his Singularitie* (1591); Samuel Rowlands, *Diogenes Lanthorne* (1607); Anthony Stafford, *Staffords Heavenly Dogge* (1615); and William Goddard, *A Satirycall Dialogue or a sharplye-invective conference, betweene Allexander the great, and that truelye woman-hater Diogynes* (1616?). For a general review of Diogenes's reception in early modern England, see John Lievsay, "Some Renaissance Views of Diogenes the Cynic," in *Joseph Quincy Adams: Memorial Studies*, ed. James McManaway, Giles Dawson, and Edwin Willoughby (Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1948), 447–55.

14. Building off Lievsay's earlier work, Mazella distinguishes between the High View of Diogenes as a potent counselor and the Low View of him as a melancholic and a misanthrope. However, neither Lievsay nor Mazella discuss Diogenes's reception as a parasite-jester (see Mazella, *Making of Modern Cynicism*, 47–80). On the connection between Diogenes and the tradition of "licensed" fools, see Daniel Kinney, "Heirs of the Dog: Cynic Selfhood in Medieval and Renaissance Culture," in *The Cynics* (see note 3), 294–328. For an early modern example of Diogenes figuring simultaneously as a fool and a misanthrope, see Samuel Rowlands, *Diogenes Lanthorne* (1607).

15. Only Lievsay and Mazella have attempted to take a comprehensive view of England's early modern Diogeneana.

16. Mazella, *Making of Modern Cynicism*, 49.

17. Francis Bacon makes precisely this point in *The Wisdome of the Ancients* chapter "Cassandra, siue Parresia" [Cassandra, or free speech]. Warning against the "vnprofitable liberty of vntimely admonitions and counselles," Bacon argues that counselors who insist upon absolute candor will "in all their endeauors . . . auail nothing" precisely because they "are so ouerweened with the sharpnesse and dexteritie of their own wit and capacitie" (see Bacon, *The Wisdome of the Ancients*, trans. Sir Arthur Gorges [London: John Bill, 1619], sig. A^{v}–A_{2}^{v}; quoted in David Colclough, *Freedom of Speech in Early Stuart England* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005], 61).

18. William Shakespeare, *The History of King Lear*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, 2 vols. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008), 2:1.118. In a key instance, my analysis requires me to work with the Quarto edition of *King Lear*. For the sake of uniformity, all further citations are to the same edition and in text.

19. The widely read and anonymously authored *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (at the time attributed to Cicero) recommends that an advisor moderate his candor in order to benefit from its forcefulness without losing all authority with one's interlocutor (see *Ad C. Herennium, de ratione dicendi* [*Rhetorica ad Herennium*] [Rhetoric: For Herennius], trans. Harry Caplan [London: Heinemann, 1954], 4.37.49, pp. 350–53).

> If Frank Speech [*licentia*] of this sort seems too pungent, there will be many means of palliation, for one may immediately thereafter add something of this sort: "I here appeal to your virtue, I call on your wisdom, I bespeak your old habit," so that praise may quiet the feelings aroused by the frankness. As a result, the praise frees the hearer from wrath and annoyance, and the frankness deters him from error. (353)

20. Richard Strier is especially alert to Kent's initial courtliness in his analysis of "impossible radicalism" in *King Lear* (see Strier, *Resistant Structures: Particularity, Radicalism, and Renaissance Texts* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995], esp. 182–83).

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21. For Kenneth Graham, these two failures of free speech, combined with Kent's return to a moderated stance when later disguised as Caius, serve as Shakespeare's way of drawing out the moral that "to make its resistance matter, plainness must therefore cease to insist that it is absolutely powerful and absolutely true; and it must instead find new ways to perform." Whereas Graham attributes to Shakespeare a sense of conclusiveness on this matter, I think it more precise to say that Shakespeare diagnoses the problem of the truth-teller as being one of eternal return (see Graham, *The Performance of Conviction: Plainness and Rhetoric in the Early English Renaissance* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994], 193).

22. For an incomplete (but representative) sampling of such references, see Johannes Ferrarius, *A vvoorke of Ioannes Ferrarius Montanus, touchynge the good orderynge of a common weale*, trans. William Bauande (1559), 113^{v}; Richard Rainolde, *A booke called the Foundacion of rhetorike* (1563), xvi^{v}; Thomas Rogers, *A philosophicall discourse, entituled, The anatomie of the minde* (1576), 111^{v}–12^{r}; Thomas Blenerhasset, *The seconde part of the Mirrour for magistrates* (1578), 44^{v}–46^{r}; Edward Dyer, *The prayse of nothing* (1585); Thomas Fenne, *Fennes frutes* (1590), 2^{r}–5^{r}; and Francis Bacon, *Twoo bookes of Francis Bacon: Of the proficience and advancement of learning, divine and humane* (1605), 37^{r}.

23. Erasmus, *Apophthegmes*, M5^{r}–M5^{v}. For another influential version of this story, see Lucius Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes*, trans. Sir Thomas North (1579), 728. Imprinted at London by Thomas Vautroullier and Iohn VVight.

24. Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique* (London: Richard Grafton, 1553; repr., Gainesville, FL: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1962), sig. Ddii^{v}; quoted in Colclough, *Freedom of Speech*, 47.

25. Colclough, *Freedom of Speech*, 48.

26. Wilson, *Arte of Rhetorique*, sig. Av.; quoted in ibid.

27. Michael Pincombe has argued that John Lyly whitewashes his account of Alexander the Great in order to alert viewers to the critical subtext behind his use of Alexander as a placeholder for Elizabeth I. As he explains, *Campaspe* begins with a discussion of Alexander's benevolence when conquering Thebes, a patent historical falsehood that quietly subverts the play's overtly positive depiction of absolute sovereignty (see Pincombe, *The Plays of John Lyly: Eros and Eliza* [Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1996], 29).

28. John Lyly, *Campaspe*, ed. G. K. Hunter (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press), 1.3.71–74.

29. For an example of criticism that credits Alexander with magnanimity and faults Diogenes for being "obstinate and self-centered," see Joseph Westlund, "The Theme of Tact in *Campaspe*," *SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 16, no. 2 (1976): 213–21.

30. Michel Foucault arrives at a remarkably similar understanding of Diogenes in his final course of lectures at the Collège de France (see Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 158–303 [*Le courage de la vérité*, 152–294]).

31. David Bevington, "John Lyly and Queen Elizabeth: Royal Flattery in *Campaspe* and *Sapho and Phao*," *Renaissance Papers 1966*, 57–67, quotation on 59. For a more extensive discussion of Lyly's humanist and courtly commitments, see G. K. Hunter, *John Lyly, the Humanist as Courtier* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962).

32. To be fair, Bevington is simply pointing out that *Campaspe* falls into the tradition of the "debate play," which follows in the spirit of humanist dialogues by pressing distinct worldviews into contact with one another. However, the play's separation of valorized and debased Cynic stances does not produce a debate, in Bevington's sense of the word, precisely because the two depictions of Cynicism share a single worldview—one that is governed by the *absence* of debate. By *debate*, I mean to name the conditions of possibility

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for adjudicating opposing truth claims, without which there can be no meaningful exchange of ideas.

33. I am indebted to Shea for my understanding of this vigilant segregation and its deleterious effects, which Shea locates in the debate—among the *philosophes* in eighteenth-century France—over who most successfully embodied the Diogenes of their age.

34. I derive my conception of aspect from Ludwig Wittgenstein's discussion of the duck-rabbit illusion (see Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe [Oxford: Blackwell, 1997], esp. part 2, para. 11).

35. William Shakespeare, *The Life of Timon of Athens*, in Greenblatt, *Norton Shakespeare* (see note 18), 536. Further citations will be to this edition and in text.

36. Apemantus is either called a dog or self-identifies as one on six other occasions: 1.1.204, 1.1.271, 2.2.81–82, 4.3.251, 4.3.314, and 4.3.358. Similarly, Aristotle refers to Diogenes by way of his popular moniker rather than his proper name: "[A]nd the Dog called Athenian taverns the messes of Attica" (Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, ed. Hugh Lawson-Tancred [New York: Penguin, 1991], 237). Various scholarly editions of *Timon* have made note of the connection (e.g., see Karl Klein, "Appendix: The Timon Legend," in *Timon of Athens*, by William Shakespeare [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001], 196–201, quotation on 201; and Katharine Eisaman Maus, ed., *The Life of Timon of Athens*, by William Shakespeare [New York: W. W. Norton, 1997], 1.1.203n7). The fact that Shakespeare's fools are often called dogs is, I think, more compellingly explained as a reference to Cynicism than as a joke upon the actor Robert "Armin's dog-like attributes," as David Wiles has suggested (see Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown: Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse* [Cambridge: Cambridge University. Press, 1987], 155).

37. William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, in Greenblatt, *Norton Shakespeare* (see note 18), 3.1.1.

38. Erasmus, *Apophthegmes*, sig. I.vi^{r}. Daniel Kinney offhandedly observes Shakespeare's citation of Diogeneana in a footnote (see Kinney, "Cynic Selfhood in Medieval and Renaissance Culture," in *The Cynics* [see note 3], 300n16).

39. I am indebted to Chris Geekie for his excellent help in translating and interpreting the Greek in this passage.

40. This conception of Cynic *diatribê* thus forms a pair with Lily and Wilson's interpretation of Cynic *parrhêsia*. For an account of diatribe as a specifically Cynic mode of democratic critical engagement (speaking to the masses rather than addressing only select philosophical community), see Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech* (Los Angeles: Semiotext[e], 2001), 219–20.

41. Strier, *Resistant Structures*, 1.

42. Erasmus, *Apophthegmes*, sig. Nii^{r} (no. 65 in "Diogenes," book 1). In "An Apologie of Raymond Sebonde," Michel Montaigne also refers to the story of Plato's man (in *The Essayes or Morall, Politike and Millitarie Discourses*, trans. John Florio [London, 1603], 315–16).

43. Erasmus, *Apophthegmes*, sig. I.vi^{r}.

44. E. M. M. Taylor, Jane Donawerth, F. G. Butler, and Steven Doloff have all noticed the topical references to Cynicism in Lear's address to, and reflection upon, Tom o'Bedlam (see Taylor, "Lear's Philosopher," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 6, no. 3 [1955]: 364–65; Donawerth, "Diogenes the Cynic and Lear's Definition of Man, *King Lear* 3.4.101–9," *English Language Notes* 15, no. 1 [1977]: 10–14; Butler, "Who Are King Lear's Philosophers? An Answer, with Some Help from Erasmus," *English Studies* 67, no. 6 [1986]: 511–24; and Doloff, "'Let me talk with this philosopher': The Alexander/Diogenes Paradigm in *King Lear*," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 54, no. 3 [1991]: 253–55). In a recent essay, Laurie Shannon acknowledges the play's reference to Cynicism, though she goes on to discuss

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Lear's definition of unaccommodated man in broader terms as the basis for investigating the play's anti-exceptionalist vision of humankind (see Shannon, "Poor, Bare, Forked: Animal Sovereignty, Human Negative Exceptionalism, and the Natural History of *King Lear,*" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 60, no. 2 [2009]: 168–96).

45. Taylor, "Lear's Philosopher," 365.

46. Donawerth, "Diogenes the Cynic," 14.

47. Erasmus, *Apophthegmes*, sig. Mii–Miii. In a similar anecdote, Diogenes sees a boy drink water with cupped hands, and realizing that "this lad is in frugalitee a degree aboue me, y^{t} dooe carry about me superfluous furniture," he immediately throws his cup away (sig. Mii).

48. Butler, "Who Are King Lear's Philosophers?" esp. 511–13. For a useful primer on Crates, see Donald R. Dudley, *A History of Cynicism: From Diogenes to the 6th Century A.D.* (London: Methuen, 1937), esp. 42–53, as well as Luis E. Navia, *Classical Cynicism: A Critical Study* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1996), esp. 119–44.

49. R. A. Foakes, ed., *King Lear*, by William Shakespeare, 3rd ed. (London: Thomson Learning, 1997), 3.4.153n.

50. Erasmus, *Apophthegmes*, sig. Niii^{r}:

> *Diogenes* on a tyme, bearyng in his hande a lighted candle, walked vp and downe the mercate stede, in a veraye bright and clere daye, like one that sought a thyng loste. And diuerse persones askyng, what he did: Mary I seeke a man, quod he.

51. Erasmus, *Apophthegmes*, sig. Six^{r}:

> He vsed now and then to resorte to ymages of stone or brasse, or other metalle, sette vp in the honour of this or that Godde, and to aske one or other boune of theim. And to such persones as made greate woondreyng, wherfore he so did, y^{t} I maye enure myself, quod he, not to bee moued, ne to take in eiuill parte, if at any tyme, I dooe not obtein my requestes & peticions that I aske of menne.

52. For a thorough account of the differences between the Quarto and Folio that cumulatively effect a recharacterization of the Fool, see Robert Hornback, "The Fool in Quarto and Folio *King Lear,*" *English Literary Renaissance* 34, no. 3 (2004): 306–38. For an entry into the debate regarding the relation of the Quarto to the Folio editions of *King Lear*, which some view as differentiated texts with distinctive dramatic visions, and others view as less and more revised versions of a single dramatic ideal, see Steven Urkowitz, *Shakespeare's Revision of King Lear* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980); and Gary Taylor and Michael Warren, eds., *The Division of the Kingdoms: Shakespeare's Two Versions of King Lear* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

53. In his editorial footnote, David Bevington suggests that the "Fool identifies himself as the sweet fool, Lear as the bitter fool who counseled himself to give away his kingdom." The Riverside and Arden editions contain similar glosses. However, I follow Robert Hornback's contention that the Quarto edition of *King Lear* consistently depicts the Fool as a figure that engages in "bitter truth-telling," making the Fool the proper target of the riddle's bitter designation. See William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. Bevington (New York: Pearson Longman, 2007), 1216n144; William Shakespeare, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans, Herschel Baker, and J. J. M. Tobin, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 1310n147; William Shakespeare, *The Arden Shakespeare*, vol. 275: *King Lear*, ed. Kenneth Muir (London: Methuen, 1972); and Hornback, "Fool in Quarto," 306–38.

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